



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL LISTED AS THREATENED SPECIES

The Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner announced today that the northern spotted owl will be listed as a threatened species throughout its range in Washington, Oregon, California, and British Columbia.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, the listing decision was made strictly on the basis of the species' biological status. The Act does not permit economic factors to be considered as part of a listing decision.

Turner said the Fish and Wildlife Service is prepared to go forward immediately with a regular program of "consultation" on proposed timber harvest activities.

"To minimize any possible delay or disruption, the Fish and Wildlife Service has already established guidelines for formal consultation with the Federal timber-managing agencies," Turner said. "As a result, we are way ahead of where we usually are when a species is listed because we have been conferring with these agencies for over 6 months. In carrying out formal consultations, we will continue to provide an orderly review of

(over)

timber sales and other activities that may affect the survival of this species. We will work closely with the Federal agencies and all other interested parties to find alternatives that will enable owls and people to co-exist."

Since the owl was proposed for listing last year, the Fish and Wildlife Service has participated in a "conferencing" process with the principal timber management agencies in the Pacific Northwest--the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management--on actions such as logging, roadbuilding, and other forest management practices that may affect the northern spotted owl.

Under the Endangered Species Act, an "endangered" species is one in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A "threatened" species is one likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. The Endangered Species Act makes it illegal to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect an endangered or threatened animal species, and also prohibits interstate or foreign commerce. Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species.

There are approximately 2,000 known pairs of northern spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) throughout its range from southwestern British Columbia through western Washington, western Oregon, and the coast range area of northwestern California to San Francisco Bay. Populations are not evenly distributed throughout the range. Densities are lowest in northern Washington and southern British Columbia and highest in the Cascades of Oregon and the Klamath Mountains of southwestern Oregon and northwestern California.

In making its determination, the Fish and Wildlife Service found the northern spotted owl is threatened throughout its range by the loss and adverse modification of suitable habitat and the resultant decline in population. Northern spotted owls occur primarily in old-growth and mature forest habitats, but may be found also in some younger forests that have characteristics such as high canopy closure; large overstory trees; numerous large snags or trees with large cavities, broken tops, and other deformities; large accumulations of fallen trees and other woody debris on the ground; and sufficient open space below the canopy for owls to fly.

The listing action will be published in the Federal Register and takes effect July 23, 1990.

The listing process was triggered in 1987 when the Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species. The Service published a proposal to list the species as threatened on June 23, 1989. A 6-month public comment period on the listing proposal ran through December 1989 and was reopened in March and April 1990. Public hearings were held in Olympia, Washington; Portland and Eugene, Oregon; and Redding, California, and drew an estimated 10,000 participants. The Service received more than 23,000 public comments on the proposed listing.

Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan said today that he and Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter will announce further information about agency management plans Tuesday, June 26.